# Roles in Community Improvement: Government, Groups, Individuals

The Task Force asked participants at the February public meeting: what would make the Highlands a great place for residents and businesses?  A wide variety of answers were received, with suggestions for a number of projects and programs.  Some of the suggested projects and programs lie outside of the role of government and some would be more effectively implemented by a non-governmental entity.  Community revitalization involves the whole community including government, groups, and even individuals.  Each of these actors has a distinct role in serving the community to implement the programs necessary to make the Highlands a great place.

*Governmental Agencies*
Governmental agencies have a responsibility to provide services to the community.  City government is only one service provider in the community.  King County, the Renton Housing Authority, and the Renton School District are all governmental agencies with specific responsibilities in the community.  Some of the services government agencies provide include: public health, emergency response, police service, recreation, education, housing, utilities, planning, transportation systems, permitting, waste removal, and maintenance of public facilities.  Governmental agencies provide services based upon established rules, regulations, policies, and contracts- a formal system that involves open public decision making.  Financial support is provided by taxes, grants, and other City revenues.

*Community Groups*
Examples of community groups could include: scouting groups, churches, neighborhood associations, homeowner's associations, non-profit organizations, recreational clubs, social clubs, or service clubs.  Sometimes these groups are organized specifically to assist the community, and other times working on community issues may be related to their mission or purpose.  Services provided by community groups could include: emergency shelter or housing, neighborhood picnics, clean up events, block watch, meal programs, recreation events, community "drives" (books, food, clothing, school supplies), newsletter circulation, and any number or variety of service projects. Community groups can very effectively provide services dependent upon social networks.  Some services provided can be very formalized and others can be very informal.  Financial support comes from a variety of sources: membership fees or dues, community fundraising or donations, or grants.

*Individuals*
Individuals may not have a formal responsibility to serve the community, but may do so by engaging with community groups or governmental agencies.  Individuals are subject to personal responsibility as expressed through various laws, rights, and social conventions.  Well functioning society is built upon individuals engaging responsibly. Individuals also emerge as community leaders, either in a formal way, such an elected official, or in an informal way, such as bringing a meal to a sick neighbor.  Typically, individuals are not financed by anything but their own pocket book, but individuals can provide the most nimble, flexible, personal, and informal range of services.